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ABSTRACT

While research on school-based review is in progress, and while--thus far--it has proved difficult to show a causal link between school self-evaluation and educational improvement (especially when pupil performance is the main criterion of success), some schools have been quick to implement decisions regarding the curriculum that have arisen from a review. To give a concise account of the principles and practice of school-based review and development in England and Wales, this document illustrates some schemes currently in use. Specifically, the sections provide: (1) issues in school-based review and development including accountability, participation, and the external view; (2) a comparison of the Guidelines for Review and Internal Development in Schools scheme, the ILEA scheme, and the Salford schemes for school-based review and development; (3) the six stages of school self-evaluation and development; and (4) suggestions for external support for review and development. In addition to benefiting from improvements to the pupils' education, a school-based review should enable the head of a school to gain from a greater understanding of the perceptions of the staff and others involved regarding the school's strengths and weaknesses. (10 references) (KM)

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# MAKING SCHOOL BASED REVIEW WORK

by

Michael Birchenough

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## Foreword

The aim of this booklet is to give a concise account of the principles and practice of school based review and development in England and Wales, illustrated by some schemes currently in use. It should be useful to heads and senior staff wishing to increase their knowledge of school based review and development and to understand the implications for school management. It may also be of interest to the staff of local education authorities.

The author would like to acknowledge the very substantial help given in the preparation this booklet by Mrs. Jo Stephens, Senior Assistant Education Officer, Oxfordshire County Council.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 DEFINITION

School based review (SBR), often called school self-evaluation or self-appraisal, means the carrying out of a systematic examination of the work of a school by teachers in the school, with the main aim of finding ways of improving the education provided for the pupils. The term 'school based' implies that it is the staff themselves as a whole who take on the responsibility for the review, sometimes with help from outside the school. It is usually understood that school based review implies development, but the fuller description 'school based review and development' may be used to emphasise the importance of taking action after the review.

## 1.2 AIMS

The main reason for carrying out review and development in a school is to provide an improved education for the pupils. Research on this subject is in progress, but it is not easy to prove a direct causal link between the two, especially if the performance of pupils is the main criterion of success. However, some schools have quickly put into effect decisions arising from a review, e.g. on the curriculum, and the curriculum offer to the pupils has improved. The reactions of teachers who have taken part in review and development show that many believe they have gained from the experience in terms of personal and professional development.

In addition to benefiting from improvements to the pupils' education, the head of a school should gain from a greater understanding of the perceptions which the staff and others involved have of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The identification of the needs of the staff for in-service education and training should also be valuable to the head and senior staff.

## 2. ISSUES

### 2.1 ACCOUNTABILITY

Three different kinds of accountability have been described - moral, professional and contractual (East Sussex Accountability Project 1980). The first is based on the idea that there is a moral obligation to be accountable to clients for one's work. The second, overlapping with the first, is based on the idea of responsibility to oneself and colleagues as a member of a profession. The third implies an obligation to give an account of one's work to an employer or other people in authority and may be illustrated by an argument on the following lines. The LEA is responsible for providing efficient education in sufficient schools for the needs of the community it serves. The LEA delegates certain responsibilities for the work of county schools to governing bodies, which have the general direction or oversight of the work of the school, and to the heads, who are responsible for the day to day running, the internal organisation, management and discipline of the school. The head is accountable to the governing body and one way of rendering an account of the school's work is to report to the governors on how the school has used the resources made available and the results achieved. This brings an external element into the process of school based review and development. A simple test for accountability in this sense is whether a report for individuals or bodies other than the school staff is required.

It is sometimes argued that reviewing for accountability in the contractual sense and for improvement are incompatible. Those who hold this view believe that teachers will not be fully committed to review and development unless they have freely chosen to do the review and decided the form and distribution of any report which they produce. In practice, schemes set up by LEAs which involve accountability have also been designed for school improvement. The issue has been put (Nuttall 1981) in this way. Referring to procedures whereby professionals play the major role investigating breaches of their codes of practice he says:-

*'In the case of schools, the teaching profession might demonstrate that they had procedures, of which self-evaluation could be a major component, to keep the quality of education under review, and with enough teeth to ensure that changes were made when needed.*

*Accountability and professional development are therefore not necessarily incompatible, but admittedly the tide is not running in favour of accountability procedures which appear to exclude the public or its representatives. Then, assuming that formal account has to be rendered to parents, governors and/or LEA, is there still a way of ensuring that the exercise can also be one that generates professional development?'*

The action needed to meet the demands of accountability could vary from giving limited factual information to preparing detailed reports which included judgements on the quality of education and which were available to a wide circle of readers. Those to whom the account was to be made might agree to maintain some degree of confidentiality: a report might be confidential to the LEA and/or governing body. The governors might be

content to have a report after the review had taken place, and not to involve themselves in the review process. It seems sensible to find out beforehand what is needed to satisfy the demand for accountability, to negotiate with the parties concerned and to arrive at a clear agreement.

Experience with some LEA schemes where there is an element of accountability has shown that professional development need not be hindered where there is reporting to governors. More positively, the governors may be in a position to help with securing resources, with advice, and in other ways.

## 2.2 PARTICIPATION

Two aspects of participation will be considered here: one is whether or not teachers can choose to take part in a scheme for review and development and the second is how far they can influence the nature of the process. As far as the first point is concerned there are LEAs, such as Oxfordshire and ILEA, in which participation is mandatory, an agreed scheme for the authority having been negotiated. At the other end of the spectrum is the situation in which schools are not expected or required to take part in any systematic form of review and development. In between is a range of practices, one approach being to devise a scheme to be used on a voluntary basis and another to encourage schools to carry out some systematic form of review and development, choosing whichever seems most appropriate.

A second aspect of participation is the opportunity to influence the kind of review and development. Where there is an agreed scheme in an LEA the teachers will normally have been involved in preparing the scheme, trying it out in their schools, helping to decide how it should be implemented in the authority as a whole, and how it should be reported. Teachers also have an opportunity to suggest modifications in the light of experience and there are many cases where this has been done.

There is a difference between schemes using an agreed framework and the GRIDS approach, which is described in the next section. In the former case the 'agenda' is agreed beforehand whereas in the second it is decided by the staff. The latter has advantages and disadvantages. If the staff decide what is to be reviewed they are likely to be committed to carrying out the review and taking the necessary action. On the other hand using a previously agreed framework makes it more likely that important areas of a school's work are covered in a reasonable space of time.

## 2.3 THE EXTERNAL VIEW

The preface to the 1977 edition of "Keeping the school under review", produced by the ILEA inspectorate (ILEA 1977), said:

*'There is a danger in any form of self-assessment that people do not always see themselves as others see them. To overcome this it is hoped that schools who take into use a form of self-assessment such as that outlined in this paper will be prepared to discuss the outcomes with colleagues in the inspectorate, so that they may have the benefit of an external viewpoint to put beside their own. Additionally the possibility of some form of cross-moderation through linking at departmental or school level in relation to different forms of assessment might well be worth considering.'*

The first suggestion, involving the inspectorate, has already been accepted in the ILEA. For example, it is now part of the procedure for the quinquennial review produced by secondary schools for the inspectorate to comment on the school's report. The second, the idea of cross-moderation, was based on existing practice in some parts of the ILEA. In one division heads of primary schools regularly visited each other's schools and discussed what they had seen. This is an approach that deserves further attention. Other outsiders who could be used are staff of institutions of further and higher education, wardens of teachers' centres, staff from other LEAs and HMI (see Nuttall 1981).

In the next section several schemes for review and development are described and compared. These specific examples should help to illustrate the issues discussed in this section. A full discussion of the issues, an annotated bibliography and the results of a survey involving all LEAs in England and Wales are contained in "Self-evaluation and the teacher" by Gordon Elliott and co-workers, (Elliott 1981 and 1982).

## 3. A COMPARISON OF SOME SCHEMES FOR SCHOOL BASED REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT

### 3.1 THE GRIDS SCHEME

(Guidelines for Review and Internal Development in Schools)

The method provides process guidelines for review and development to be applied to the school as whole. The guidelines were developed over the period 1981 to 1983 in collaboration with the staff of schools and LEA officers in five pilot LEAs (Avon, Clwyd, Coventry, Essex, Leeds). The staff of thirty-one schools took part (15 primary, 1 middle, 15 secondary). The guidelines have now been published in the form of two handbooks, one for primary and one for secondary schools (McMahon A. et al. 1984). A second phase of the project has been approved by the School Curriculum Development Committee to run for two years from September 1984, with a possible extension for one year. This will allow time for more work on dissemination and the further development of the method and materials.

The key principles of the GRIDS approach have been stated as follows (McMahon A. et al. 1984) :-

1. the aim is to achieve internal school development and not to produce a report for formal accountability purposes;

2. the main purpose is to move beyond the review stage into development for school improvement;

3. the staff of the school should be consulted and involved in this review and development process as much as possible;

4. decisions about what happens to any information or reports produced should rest with the teacher and others concerned;

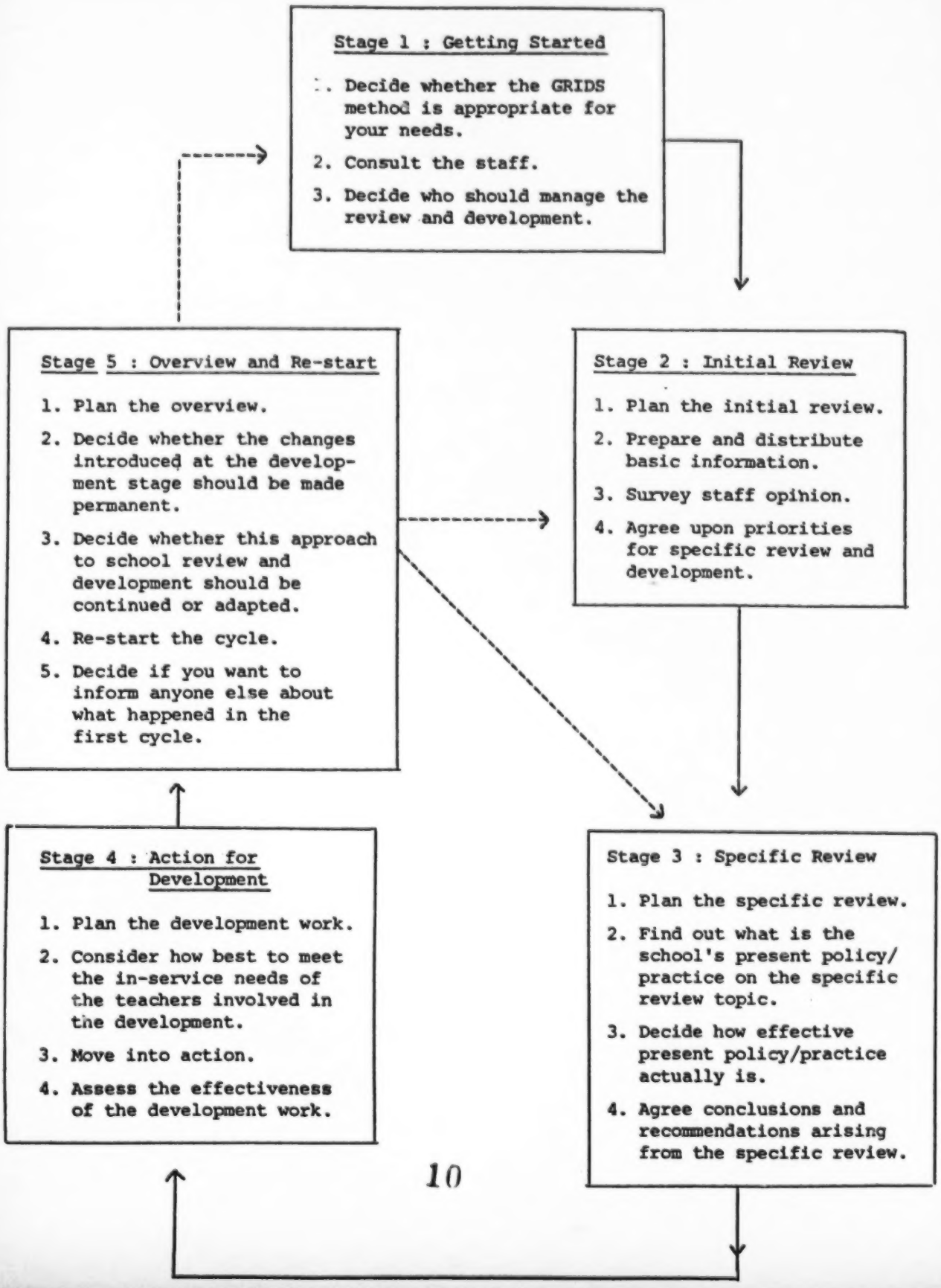
5. the head and teachers should decide whether and how to involve the other groups in the school, e.g. pupils, parents, advisers, governors;

6. outsiders (e.g., external consultants) should be invited to provide help and advice when this seems appropriate;

7. the demands made on key resources like time, money and skilled personnel should be realistic and feasible for schools and LEAs.

The five stages of the review and development are shown in the diagram. One feature is that GRIDS involves an initial review, using a questionnaire, to allow the staff to pick out the features of the school's work they think have the highest priority for review and development. This is followed by a specific review, action for development, and an overview followed by a fresh cycle, either with a further review and priority setting or going direct to a further specific review. A decision is taken at the overview stage on informing individuals or groups outside the school about what has happened in the first cycle. The approach is therefore to tackle one or two areas at a time rather than to make a detailed review of the school's work as a whole.

## THE GRIDS PROCESS


Stage 1 : Getting Started
1. Decide whether the GRIDS method is appropriate for your needs.
2. Consult the staff.
3. Decide who should manage the review and development.
Stage 2 : Initial Review
1. Plan the initial review.
2. Prepare and distribute basic information.
3. Survey staff opinion.
4. Agree upon priorities for specific review and development.
Stage 3 : Specific Review
1. Plan the specific review.
2. Find out what is the school's present policy/ practice on the specific review topic.
3. Decide how effective present policy/practice actually is.
4. Agree conclusions and recommendations arising from the specific review.
Stage 4 : Action for Development
1. Plan the development work.
2. Consider how best to meet the in-service needs of the teachers involved in the development.
3. Move into action.
4. Assess the effectiveness of the development work.
Stage 5 : Overview and Re-start
1. Plan the overview.
2. Decide whether the changes introduced at the development stage should be made permanent.
3. Decide whether this approach to school review and development should be continued or adapted.
4. Re-start the cycle.
5. Decide if you want to inform anyone else about what happened in the first cycle.

## 3.2 THE ILEA SCHEME

This scheme had its origins in a discussion between the Chief Inspector and heads during the school year 1975/76 about ways in which the staff of schools might take more responsibility for examining their work and suggesting improvements. Two working parties, one for primary and one for secondary schools, were set up. They included heads and inspectors and their work provided the basis for 'Keeping the School Under Review' (KSUR) which was published in 1977. It had a section for primary schools and one for secondary schools. Each contained check-lists of questions on such matters as the pupils, organisation and curriculum, the school environment, the use of resources. The secondary section included questions on departmental or faculty self-assessment. Both the primary and secondary parts included a section on action to be taken following the review and questions for the head and individual teachers to ask themselves. The booklet was designed for schools to use on an optional basis. Schools carrying out a self-assessment were recommended to involve the inspectorate so that they could have an external view for comparison with their own.

After discussions with teachers and pilot experiments it was decided that as from the school year 1981/82 all schools should provide an annual report for governors. In addition secondary schools would provide a quinquennial review for governors. A revised version of Keeping the School Under Review was issued in 1983 (ILEA 1983). The main differences from the earlier version were that there were separate booklets for primary, secondary, and special schools, and that a fuller treatment was given to such matters as education for a multi-ethnic society, equal opportunities for boys and girls and special educational needs. The primary booklet provides the basis for annual reviews in primary schools and aspects of the secondary booklet are included in annual and quinquennial reviews.

The main headings in the primary booklet are:-

A The children, their parents, the governors and the community

B Teaching organisation - school staff - responsibility structure - non-teaching staff - staff development

C The curriculum - continuity - assessment - extending the curriculum

D Organisation and management

E The building and the general environment

F Questions for the individual teacher to ask himself or herself

G Questions for the headteacher to ask himself or herself

H The future

J The acid test (Would I recommend a colleague to apply for a post at this school? Would I recommend this school to friends for their children?)

## 3.3 THE SALFORD SCHEMES

Salford was one of the pioneers in school-based review. In 1974 nine primary schools considered to be well above average in the quality of their work were chosen for investigation. The idea was to find out if there were common features in their curriculum, organisation, management and philosophy. In 1977 the LEA produced two booklets, one a discussion paper called 'Good Practice in the Primary School' and the second a series of checklists on the curriculum and school management called 'The Primary School Profile'. The Profile consisted of twelve checklists on the curriculum and schools were asked to complete two per term over a cycle of two years. The individual school returns to the Education Department were treated as confidential but a general analysis was reported to the Education Committee in 1980. The LEA subsequently produced a new booklet 'Profile 82' (Salford 1982) in collaboration with heads and teachers. The cycle of the programme was extended from two to four years; staff of the school could choose the order in which they reviewed aspects of their school's work and the responses they made to the 'key questions' continued to be confidential to the LEA. To assist teachers in carrying out the review the LEA has also produced a companion booklet 'Getting the best out of self-evaluation in the primary school'. Profile 82 has four non-curricular sections: the learning environment; relationships; educational aims, philosophy, curriculum; leadership in school. The fifth section is on teaching skills, for the use of individual teachers. The remaining eight sections relate to various aspects of the primary school curriculum (e.g. reading and language development, mathematics). The LEA has now produced a scheme for secondary schools: 'Schools looking at themselves' (Salford 1983).

As with the primary document, its preparation and introduction in schools was a co-operative undertaking, involving heads, teachers, officers and a representative of Manchester University. All teachers were presented with their own copy of the document; this was done at staff meetings of individual high schools when the purpose and implications of self appraisal were clarified.

Beyond that of confirming that all schools are adopting and adapting the guide in a planned sequence, there is no mandatory response required by the LEA. Several patterns are already emerging, the most common of which is an initiation of self appraisal through various sub-groups, notably subject departments.

The guide deals with broad areas of school and classroom management, staff roles and curriculum. Particular subjects are not identified, but performance indicators are used which apply across the whole curriculum. The specified performance indicators are associated with the whole school, constituent parts of the school and individual teachers.

## 3.4 A COMPARISON OF THE SCHEMES

The table shows the differences and simi' rities in a concise form. The first section shows that, in contrast to the GRIDS scheme where the decision to take part in the review and development should be a collective staff decision, the two LEAs have agreed schemes in which schools are expected to participate. In the GRIDS scheme the staff should decide on whether and how

to report to anyone outside the school. In the ILEA scheme, it has been agreed beforehand that there shall be a report to the governors. In the Salford primary scheme reporting is to the LEA on a confidential basis; in secondary schools reporting is by negotiation.

In all cases it is the work of the school that is being examined. However, the two LEA schemes provide for self-assessment by heads and teachers, which is not reported. Self-assessment by individuals is not part of the GRIDS scheme.

The GRIDS scheme emphasises the process and the LEA schemes the content of the review, though guidance on process is available in both LEAs. The GRIDS scheme deals at considerable length with action for development. The LEA schemes give less space to development in the printed material, but there are follow-up procedures involving the LEA administration and advisory service.

The GRIDS approach encourages staff to concentrate on a limited number of aspects of the school's work in any one year, while the LEA schemes require coverage of all important aspects within a defined time cycle.

Heads and staff thinking of starting a systematic process of review and development or already involved in an LEA scheme may find it helpful to set out for themselves an analysis of the main features of the scheme(s) in question. This could help clarify their own thinking about the matter and be a useful aid to discussion with staff. The analysis used here is a relatively simple one and a more detailed one is contained in a publication already quoted, 'School Self-Evaluation - Accountability with a Human Face?' (Nuttall 1981).

A COMPARISON OF SCHEMES FOR SCHOOL BASED REVIEW

| Aspects of the scheme \ Scheme | GRIDS | ILEA | SALFORD<br>(a) Primary<br>(b) Secondary |
|---|---|---|---|
| ho decides on aking part? | Head and staff | Participation in the agreed scheme is mandatory | Participation in the agreed schemes is mandatory |
| ho decides on eporting? | Head and staff | The LEA. Reporting is to governors | The LEA.<br>(a) Reporting in primary schools is to the LEA and returns are confidential.<br>(b) Reporting in secondary schools is by negotiation |
| hat is to be eviewed? | The work of the school<br>Self-assessment for heads and individual teachers is not part of the GRIDS method | The work of the school<br>KSUR has sections with questions for heads and teachers to ask themselves, but the answers are not included in the reports | The work of the school<br>(a) Profile 82 has a section on teaching skills with questions for individual teachers, but the answers are not included in the reports<br>(b) Schools Looking at Themselves contains performance indicators applicable to the work of the whole school |



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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| What is the process for review? | Five stages:<br>1. Getting Started<br>2. Initial Review<br>3. Specific Review<br>4. Action for Development<br>5. Overview and Re-start (see diagram) | Use of checklists and support from Inspectorate | (a) Use of Profile 82 plus "Getting the best out of self-evaluation". Teachers choose the order in which work is reviewed.<br>(b) In secondary schools teachers determine procedures. |
| What is the action or preparation for action for development? | Plan development work.<br>Consider how to meet INSET needs.<br>Move into action.<br>Assess effectiveness of development work. | Schools are asked to give priorities for action, to decide who will initiate action and what outside support and advice are needed | (a) Section on 'contemplated action' to be filled in on response form.<br>(b) Secondary schools are expected to provide feedback for action |
| What is the time scale for review? | The review, which covers a limited number of areas, is expected to be completed in a school year. | Annual review for governors of all schools.<br>Quinquennial review for governors of secondary schools | (a) In primary schools review to be completed over a four-year cycle.<br>(b) A five year cycle expected of secondary schools. |



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## 4. THE STAGES OF SCHOOL BASED REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT

### 4.1 PREPARATION

The context in which the school reviews its work is important. Local traditions and circumstances need to be taken into account: these include the emphasis currently being put upon accountability in the LEA, relationships between teachers' associations and the LEA, the role of governing bodies. If there is an agreed LEA scheme, decisions may already have been taken about whether and when a school should review its work and how it should do it. Where there is an agreed LEA scheme there will be printed material that can be read by the head and staff and the advisers will be available for discussions. An adviser with special responsibility for the school can play a major part in the early stages of preparation. The adviser will often have been involved in reviews in other schools and can point out problems which may arise and suggest solutions. In the GRIDS approach the pilot LEAs appointed an LEA supervisor, normally a senior adviser, and LEA co-ordinator, sometimes a warden of a teachers' centre or a head on secondment. The task of the supervisor included:-

(a) organising courses/conferences to explain the GRIDS approach;

(b) explaining how GRIDS related to the LEA's policies and practices;

(c) helping the exchange of information among schools, advisers, and others.

The LEA co-ordinator kept closely in touch with the participating schools, helped in information exchange, and gave other help and advice to the schools.

Before preparation starts within the school the head will already have had a strong influence on the readiness of the staff for review and development. The idea of "the climate of the school" sums up a number of factors: the quality of relationships among the staff and between staff and pupils, and the openness of all those in the school to other people's views. Experienced heads will know that creating a good school climate is a crucial part of their work. If they have helped the staff to feel confident in their work and their relationships, it is likely that the idea of reviewing their work and finding ways of improving it will already be accepted. The head should know the state of the school well enough to judge its readiness for review, but will no doubt want to consult colleagues on the staff and advisers about ways of developing the staff's commitment. The Salford booklet "Getting the best out of self-evaluation in the primary school" includes a section on preparing the ground for self-evaluation and establishing the right kind of school climate.

In the primary school the head and the whole staff can easily arrange to meet and may do so regularly to discuss school matters. A likely way of introducing the idea of a review is to use one of these staff meetings. It should be easy to see that each member of staff has a copy of printed material such as LEA guidelines. The head may wish to speak to members of staff individually, particularly the deputy. Teachers will want to know what the implications are for them in terms of the total time needed and the timetable for review and development.

The initial discussions with staff in the secondary school will need to be more structured because of the larger numbers involved. Possible ways of consulting the staff include: whole staff meetings, departmental meetings, meetings of other existing committees. It may be desirable to use more than one of these, e.g., to begin with a meeting of senior staff, followed by a meeting of the whole staff and subsequent meetings in departments and/or pastoral teams.

Before the review starts, it may be evident that some teachers will need in-service education and training (INSET) in the techniques required for review and development. For most teachers this could be done within the school, but for some, e.g. co-ordinators, at least a part might need to be done externally. The question of INSET needs for review and development will be considered more fully later.

## 4.2 STARTING THE REVIEW

Once the decision has been taken to carry out the review, it is a good idea to give clearly defined tasks to particular members of staff. For example, in the GRIDS approach it is recommended that a school co-ordinator should be appointed to plan and organise the review and development.
Among the tasks of the co-ordinator are the following:-

(a) developing and maintaining the commitment of staff;

(b) providing advice and information to teachers;

(c) monitoring the progress of the review and development and trying to evaluate its effectiveness;

(d) managing contacts with people outside the school - advisers, staff from other schools and from further and higher education.

In the pilot LEAs the heads took on the role of co-ordinator in the primary schools and deputy heads did so in the secondary schools. In any scheme it is clear that heads and deputies will play an important part, though their tasks may vary.

The same applies to heads of year and house and heads of department in secondary schools. In the GRIDS scheme it is recommended that a small core team of people should be constituted to help with carrying out the review. The team could be formed by asking for volunteers, by using an existing committee, or by nominating/selecting members. The team should be formed to represent a balance of interests, e.g., the co-ordinator plus pastoral and academic staff, representatives of different departments or faculties, and a fair representation of men and women in a mixed school.

When the teams have been formed and tasks allocated, it will be necessary to discuss how time for the exercise is to be found, when meetings are to be held, the overall timetable for the review and resource implications. It will also be useful to talk about the method of reporting.

Different ways of constructing an agenda for the review were discussed in the previous section. Where there is an agreed LEA scheme a framework for the review will exist, though there may be opportunities for the school to vary the order in which different aspects are reviewed. Some LEA schemes indicate that topics of particular kinds must be dealt with within a specified time, but leave discretion to the staff to deal with some in greater depth than others in a given year. In the GRIDS scheme the process begins with an initial review which allows the staff to express views on the priority for review of different aspects of the school's work. The four main steps indicated on the diagram are: to plan the initial review, to prepare and distribute basic information, to survey staff opinion, and to agree on priorities for specific review and development. A complete cycle of review and development normally lasts a year. The GRIDS initial review should not take longer than half a term.

In one primary school using GRIDS the survey of staff opinion showed four areas considered to be priorities: mathematics, science, creative arts, and continuity of learning. After discussion between head and staff it was decided to concentrate on mathematics and music, and specific review co-ordinators were appointed for each of these. In one secondary school communication and discipline were selected as the areas for specific review. In another secondary school five topics were chosen:

(a) staff teaching loads and marking loads;

(b) staff cover arrangements;

(c) homework procedures;

(d) careers education and guidance;

(e) health and social education.

The ILEA quinquennial review for secondary school includes a consideration of:

A. recent trends shown in annual reviews, for example, major changes in management, organisation and curriculum, statistical trends;

B. the pastoral work of the school and the work of individual departments, to include an assessment of strengths and weaknesses and future action; consultation, communication, decision-making and staff development, finance;

C. reports from librarians and media resources officers;

D. the head's assessment of the progress of the school in relation to aims and objectives.

This list does not include all the aspect of a school's work included in the review.

The District Inspector for the school will lead a team of inspectors to comment on the above and a written report is provided for the school and governors.

## 4.3 GATHERING EVIDENCE

The evidence gathered for the review is partly in the form of objective data, such as the numbers of pupils on the roll, the timetable, and the result of examinations or tests of achievement. It is also in the form of people's perceptions of the way the school works - how pupils, teachers, parents and the community, including the LEA, see the school. Much of the factual information is already available in reports of various kinds to parents, governors, and to the LEA.

Teams carrying out specific reviews in the GRIDS scheme are advised in the handbooks to examine any existing documents and policy statements, to collect information from teachers on what they actually do, using questionnaires, reports from the teachers, and interviews as appropriate, and to write a report summarising existing practice.

Some aspects of gathering evidence in the secondary school can be illustrated by a review of the work of a science department which could include:-

(a) aims and objectives
(b) departmental organisation
(c) communications within the department and with other groups in the school
(d) staffing data
(e) finance
(f) accommodation and equipment
(g) information on syllabuses/schemes of work
(h) information on examination results
(i) choice of options (e.g. at 4th and 5th year in a mixed school, the proportion of girls choosing physics).

Examples of more general subjects for review are: language and mathematics across the curriculum, multi-ethnic education, equal opportunities for boys and girls. Here again it would be necessary to examine such matters as aims and objectives as set out in statements of policy, syllabuses/schemes of work, pupil grouping, communication between staff responsible for academic and pastoral organisation. It would also be necessary to establish what was actually current practice in the school, particularly teaching and learning in the classroom.

## 4.4 EVALUATION

It is important that all those concerned with evaluating the work of a school should agree on objectives, procedures and criteria. The key question is how far the practice of the school matches its intentions. Answering this question is not easy. To take an example, one criterion might be how pupils perform in reading tests or public examinations. The difficulties of interpreting examination results are well known. It will be necessary to look at the results over a period of several years, to take into account the ability of the pupils (if this can be readily determined), and to examine the policy for entering pupils for examinations (a high pass rate might be partly the result of allowing only pupils with a good chance of success to enter). For many aspects of a school's work it will be

necessary to use subjective judgements of the effectiveness of teaching and learning. For example, it is important to have a view on how well the teaching schemes used provide for continuity and how far they help to develop in pupils an independent approach to learning. Detailed guidance on evaluation is available in such publications as 'In-school Evaluation' (Shipman 1974).

Teachers trying to evaluate the school's work will probably find it helpful to seek the help of others, particularly people outside the school who have the necessary knowledge and expertise. The LEA advisers know the schools and the LEA well and assessing the work of schools is normally part of their remit. If the right basis for co-operation could be worked out, HMI would have useful advice to offer on methodology. Staff from higher education have been invited to help in some of the GRIDS pilot schools. The idea of peer-group evaluation mentioned in Keeping the School Under Review does not seem to have been widely taken up, but is potentially valuable. Similarly it would be worth encouraging experiments in involving pupils, parents and governors in evaluation.

## 4.5 DECIDING ON ACTION FOR IMPROVEMENT

As evaluation goes on it may soon be clear that there are ways of improving current practice. Some steps can be taken quickly, particularly if they do not require extra resources or significant changes in work patterns. It might be relatively easy to do this within a department in a secondary school. However, it will usually be necessary to discuss recommendations for action arising from a specific review with the head and other members of staff before they are implemented.

In the GRIDS scheme action for development following specific reviews is the fourth of the five stages described earlier and includes the following steps:-

(a) planning the development work;

(b) considering how the in-service education needs of the teachers can be met;

(c) moving into action;

(d) assessing the effectiveness of the development work.

It may be helpful to get a quick view from the staff on the value of a change, perhaps by questionnaire, and to investigate its usefulness more fully over a longer period.

It helps in carrying out action for development to prepare an action sheet, listing the tasks to be done, who will do them, by when, and with what resources.

## 4.6 REPORTING

In any scheme the timing of reporting in relation to action needs careful consideration by head and staff. There should be a good deal of internal reporting to other members of staff, so that they may be informed and consulted about action following a review. If major changes in curriculum and organisation are planned, and particularly if there are resource implications, it is advisable to report at this stage to the governing body and the LEA advisers and administrators. The LEA staff will also need to be involved if any substantial INSET is to be arranged involving release and replacement of teachers.

The points made in the earlier discussion on accountability are relevant here. It is possible to have a report, e.g. to governors, purely for purposes of accountability, but in practice LEA schemes involving accountability are also designed for development. Such a report would be partly to inform the governors and the LEA and partly to bring them into the process of implementing recommendations for action. LEA schemes involving such reporting normally specify the headings used in the report but leave some flexibility for the head to give supplementary information and to vary timing, so that different aspects of the work of the school can be dealt with more fully at different times.

Experience in some LEAs shows that there is a tendency for reports to be overlong. This has the disadvantage of adding to the time taken up by the review and of discouraging those who need to consider and act upon the report. The reports do not always strike the right balance between description and evaluation, tending to be too descriptive. There is an opportunity cost in review and development - could some of the time occupied by the review be better used for other activities? Anything that helps to reduce the routine element in reporting and emphasises the productive use of a report should be considered. In the ILEA much of the information used for the annual review for governors is in a form suitable for the report for parents required by the 1980 Education Act.

The GRIDS handbooks emphasise the idea that it is for the head and staff to decide whether anyone other than the staff should be informed about the review, but say it is likely that the head will have informed the governors that the school is undertaking review and development and that the LEA adviser attached to the school will have been kept informed. Various ways of reporting and disseminating results to different groups are discussed, e.g. using a parents' meeting for the purpose.

If there are no agreed procedures in the LEA, the head will need skill and judgement in negotiating with the interests concerned - staff, governors, the LEA, parents. The head will have to reconcile the needs of "outsiders" to know about the work of the school and those of the staff to be able to work in an atmosphere in which their professional judgement is respected and they are not exposed to unfair criticism.

## 5. EXTERNAL SUPPORT FOR REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Whatever method is used, the school is likely to be more successful if it can draw on outside help, particularly from the LEA, both in carrying out the review and in taking the necessary action for improvement.

In carrying out review and development the school may need help of the following kinds:-

(a) advice and information on methods of review, particularly evaluation;

(b) in-service education and training;

(c) planning the use of resources.

### 5.2 Advice and information.

LEA guidelines and schemes like GRIDS provide advice and information, but they need to be supplemented by personal support. In LEA schemes advisers and inspectors are expected to play a major part. Some LEAs provided in-service education and training for the advisory service so that its members were well prepared for this role. In the pilot LEAs for the GRIDS scheme the LEA supervisor and LEA co-ordinator in particular were available for this work, backed up by the advisory service. Staff from universities, polytechnics and other institutions of higher education can be asked to help the staff of schools to devise the most appropriate methods of collecting and analysing data and to validate the teachers' assessments. Another source of help is provided by heads and teachers from other schools who may already have experience of review and development and may also have particular skills and knowledge to contribute.

### 5.3 In-service Education and training

Several aspects of INSET needs arising from review and development have already been mentioned. Some of these needs can be met relatively easily within the school. It is likely that most of the preparation for review and development can be dealt with in this way. Meeting other needs may require release from teaching duties and replacement which will need to be organised in collaboration with LEA staff and the providing institutions. It might be, for example, that a review of provision for careers education would reveal a need to send a teacher on a long course and the LEA might agree to use one of its secondments for the purpose. A similar situation might arise from a review of provision for children with special educational needs.

Because it is important for heads and senior staff to know how to carry out review and development, an LEA management development programme should ensure that opportunities for appropriate INSET are provided. This will mean planning the LEA's own management courses and those which involve other providers of courses, and ensuring that they include the skills and knowledge required for review and development.

5.4 Planning the use of resources

Most schools already spend a considerable amount of time on staff discussion and INSET. Allocating time to a systematic review and development should not therefore necessarily need extra staffing but may well mean deferring or giving up other activities. Because school based review and development is so demanding it cannot be simply added to existing work. LEA staff can help a school in planning the use of resources and perhaps with some 'pump-priming', but if school based review is to be a regular part of the work of a school it will have to be provided from the resources normally available. Similar arguments apply to the development stage. As more schools in an LEA undertake review and development it becomes less likely that the LEA can give extra resources, particularly when money is short. Where there is competition for resources, for example, for secondments for INSET, it is probable that staff from a school which has worked out an INSET policy based on a careful review will have an advantage. But in general the incentive for a school to undertake review and development and for the LEA to support it is the expectation that efficiency will be increased and resources will be used to better effect.

## 6. SUMMARY

6.1 School based review (school self-evaluation) is a way of examining the work of a school and trying to improve the education provided for the pupils in the school. It should be a collaborative process involving all the teachers. Knowing how to carry out such a review and development is an important management skill for heads and senior staff.

6.2 A major issue is the use made of the review for purposes of accountability. There is a tension between reviewing for accountability and for development, but the two purposes are not incompatible. Heads and teachers may be able to choose whether or not to participate in a scheme: in some LEAs there is an agreed scheme which requires schools to participate; in others there is a choice. In any case teachers have the opportunity, individually or collectively, to influence the kind of review and development used in an LEA. It is useful to bring into a review and development scheme an external view provided by experts, both to help in the process and to validate its findings.

6.3 A comparison of some schemes helps to clarify the issues and to illustrate the problems and opportunities of school based review. The schemes reviewed here are the approach called Guidelines for Review and Internal Development in schools (GRIDS) and those of two LEAs, ILEA and Salford. In the comparison of the schemes the following questions are asked:

- who decides on taking part ?
- who decides on reporting ?
- what is to be reviewed ?
- what is the process for review ?
- what is the action for development ?
- what is the time scale for review ?

6.4 Six main stages of review and development are discussed - preparation, starting the review, gathering evidence, evaluation, deciding on action for improvement, and reporting. The aim of this section is to illustrate various points and to give general advice and not to give the kind of detailed information that is best obtained from one of the LEA schemes or from GRIDS.

6.5 The final section discusses external support for review and development - particularly from LEAs. The main points dealt with are advice and information, in-service education and training, and planning the use of resources.

6.6 From a school management point of view, heads and senior staff thinking of starting review and development, or already involved in it, need to consider the implications for their management style (e.g. what aspects of the review can be decided by the staff), how the content of and process for the review can be best adapted for their schools, the resource implications, and the involvement of the people from outside the school - LEA staff, governors, parents and others. If the review and development is properly carried out, they can expect to achieve a better educational offer to the pupils. Staff development should also be improved and the LEA can use the INSET programmes drawn up by the staff of individual schools as a basis for an overall LEA staff development programme, including management development.

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